

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

JAN 19 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM TIMMONS

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

(Signed) HA

SUBJECT: Debbie Grinder's Vietnam Letter

My staff has prepared a draft reply (Tab A) to Debbie Grinder for your signature.

Enclosure

Tab A-Draft Reply

Clearance: JHoldridge

Dear Debbie:

Thank you for your letter to the President on Vietnam and the draft. I would like to reply on his behalf.

I appreciate your concern with U.S. policy in Vietnam. Like many young people, you question whether 'the U.S. has any business in Nam', and whether the sacrifices of many young Americans, such as your fiancée on the USS Midway, have been justified.

The President is deeply aware of the doubts you have expressed and the heavy burden of the war effort. However, he is sure that the U.S. does have a sound reason for being in Vietnam.

In simple terms, the President has determined that the U.S. has a commitment to help the South Vietnamese. The U.S. maintains this commitment because it is opposed to the overthrow of a friendly and peaceful government by the use of force and terror.

While the costs of this commitment are substantial, its principle would be meaningless if we were not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to live up to it. For this reason, the President decided that substantial sacrifices should be made in order that the American commitment to South Vietnam be fulfilled.

However, I would add that the President has also actively sought to reduce the burden of these sacrifices whenever possible. In Vietnam, he has reduced the number of U.S. soldiers and U.S. casualties there have also fallen.

Concerning the draft, he has sponsored an impartial lottery to choose those drafted. In turn, the eligibility of young men for the draft has been reduced from seven years to one year.

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It would be difficult if not impossible to explain fully the President's policy on Vietnam and the draft in a short letter. I do hope that you will feel that your concerns are understood and some effort has been made to address them.

Best regards,

William E. Timmons

Miss Debbie Grinder
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